

City Hall
Southwest corner of 8th Street and Allen
Street (facing 8th)
Boone
Boone County
Iowa

HABS No. IA-105

HABS
IOWA,
8-BOONE,
1-

PHOTOGRAPH

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS
IOWA,
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1-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
CITY HALL

HABS No. IA-105

Location: Southwest corner of 8th Street and Allen Street
(facing 8th), Boone, Boone County, Iowa

Present Owner: Demolished, 1972

Significance: Typical example of a small city hall of the late
19th century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Dates of erection: June 1874 to 25 July 1875 (Goldthwait, p. 434).
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Original owner was the City of Boone. Upon construction of the present City Hall building (1930's or 1940's), the older building was sold and its lower floors used as offices. Owned by Boone County Farm Bureau in 1971. (Timmermans, p. 1).
4. Builder: Not known. In 1971 Ronald Timmermans, an architecture student at Iowa State University, interviewed William Schroeder, grandson of William Palmer, who built several buildings in Boone in the 1870s. Timmermans reported that Schroeder believes Palmer may have been the builder. However, work was done by separate contracts for the various building trades (excavation, stone foundation, carpentry, roof) or by day labor under a superintendent (Mr. F. Castle). (Goldthwait, pp. 433, 434). Thus, since there was no general contractor, Palmer apparently could only have done a portion of the construction. The building committee probably performed the role of coordinating the work of the various people on the job.
5. Original plans: Original plans not located. Original cost was \$9,100 of which \$1,000 was for the lot. Photocopy of early view in HABS Collection.
6. Alterations and Additions: In 1908, the second floor was remodeled and equipped with a vault and metal fixtures at a cost of \$1,100. (Goldthwait, p. 434). In 1912, the first floor was remodeled at a cost of \$700. (Goldthwait, p. 434). As the building stood after 1912, it included council chambers, mayor's office, city clerk's office, the office of the engineer and superintendent of the waterworks, the police station, and the jail (Goldthwait, p. 434).

B. Historical Context:

In 1874, the City Council voted to buy a suitable lot and to construct a suitable building for their use. The initial appropriation was \$5,000 consisting of bonds sold to A. K. Wells, then in the banking business. A building committee, consisting of J. E. Ingersoll, J. K. Flint, and C. W. Carr, was appointed and ordered plans and specifications. (Goldthwait, pp. 433-434)

It seems likely that the building committee worked out the plan in consultation with various builders. The incident of the cupola is interesting and may throw some light on the design process. A local citizen wrote a letter to the editor of a local newspaper in March 1875 calling the new city hall "an ungainly structure" and objecting to the fact that it had not turned out to be the neat, unpretentious building which people originally had in mind. An additional appropriation of several thousand dollars was necessary, which did not receive the City Council's unanimous approval, as had the original appropriation for the building. Then the building committee voted to add a cupola weighing 30,000 pounds to the building, along with "other ridiculous things." The mayor, W. L. Webb, refused to sign the ordinance for the appropriation for the cupola and called for the building to be built as cheaply as possible. The committee agreed to his wishes. The writer of the letter felt that the building was a failure, an "expensive pile of masonry that could not be sold for what the material used in its construction cost," in spite of the fact that the cupola and other items had been omitted. (Boone County Democrat)

PART II. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early views:

1. One photocopy of early view (undated) in HABS Collection.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

- a. "To the Editor of the Democrat, "Boone County Democrat (Iowa), 10 March 1875.
- b. Timmermans, Ronald Jay. Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory Form, 21 April 1971.

2. Secondary and Published Sources

- a. Goldthwait, N. E. History of Boone County, Iowa. Chicago:
Pioneer Publishing Co., 1914.

Prepared from:

"Studies of Historic Architecture Part
2: Boone, City Hall (1874-75)," Engi-
neering Research Institute, (Ames, IA:
Iowa State University,) 1975 by Wesley
Shank and John D. Langholz.

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